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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA, NEA/I, PRM/ANE

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: IN A SIGN OF CHANGING TIMES U.S. NGO OPENS CLINIC  
IN IRAQI REFUGEE AREA

Classified By: Charge D'Affairs Michael Corbin, per 1.5 (b) and (d)

11. (SBU) Summary: On May 25, PRM-funded U.S. NGO International Medical Corps (IMC), with the support of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), inaugurated its first primary health care clinic in Syria. IMC is one of four PRM-funded NGOs to work in Syria and thus far the only U.S. NGO to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the SARC. Located in Sayyida Zaynab just outside of Damascus, the clinic will provide service to some 1,440 Iraqi, Syrian, and Palestinian patients every month. End Summary

12. (SBU) SARC President Dr. Abdul Rahman Attar, representatives from the UN country team, Charge and other members of the diplomatic corps and NGOs participated in the opening ceremonies presided over by IMC Country Director Hussein Ibrahim. The clinic, located in the Damascus suburb of Sayyida Zaynab, will provide low cost health care to Iraqi refugees and low income Syrians and Palestinians and expects to see over 1,440 patients per month. (Note: Sayyida Zaynab hosts the largest concentration of Iraqi Shia refugees in Syria. End Note.) The clinic, which received USD 110,000 from PRM for equipment and renovations, is housed in a refurbished hotel. Once the final MOU was signed in April with SARC, IMC immediately began renovation of the hotel. In just under two months, renovations were complete, equipment moved in, staff hired, and the clinic was able to open its doors to patients starting to assemble outside even as the visiting dignitaries received tours. Ibrahim, having worked for over a year to begin operations, proudly showed the visiting dignitaries the various medical examination rooms, pharmacy stores and testing lab. The clinic will provide a range of services including:

- Comprehensive primary health care: physicians, pediatrician, gynecologist, ophthalmologist, ear nose and throat specialists, dentist, fully equipped laboratory and pharmacy.

- Maternal and child health services: Using case management approach, trained Iraqi women from Sayyida Zaynab will provide outreach support and follow-up for women who receive care at the clinic. Case Managers will use the clinic as a base of operations and visit women at home for follow-up appointments. The maternity services will include - registration of pregnant women, creation of a delivery plan, coordination with local delivery facilities and the providing of ongoing health education for pregnant women (breast

feeding, post delivery complications and newborn care). IMC trained nurses will provide growth monitoring and nutritional counseling services to all children under the age of five and their mothers who visit the clinic.

- Health and hygiene education: IMC health educators will organize and facilitate preventative health education discussion, support promotion and sensitization campaigns and assist in identifying the most vulnerable families in the community.

13. (SBU) IMC plans to open two additional clinics in Jaramana and Masaken Barzeh in the coming months, as these areas also house a significant number of Iraqi refugees. Ibrahim also mentioned that he hopes to obtain funds so that IMC can open a clinic in Tartus and support the Pediatric Hospital in Aleppo.

14. (SBU) Despite Post preparation of department cleared guidance in anticipation of press coverage, no press turned out for the event. According to Ibrahim, all press coverage was turned off because the Minister for Syrian Arab Red Crescent Affairs was not in attendance.

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What a Difference a Year Makes  
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15. (C) Comment: Less than a year ago, the Syrian regime openly resisted the idea of international and American NGOs operating in Syria. Today, three NGOs (IMC, Danish Refugee Council and Premier Urgence) have signed the required MOU to

officially operate and implement programs in Syria, and Mercy Corps is operating here under an agreement with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Though the SARG approval process remains slow-going for NGOs seeking to operate in Syria, IMC's clinic will provide relief to two other SARC/UNHCR clinics in the area which are currently receiving an average of 700-900 cases daily. IMC's ability to start operations quickly after its MOU was signed has demonstrated for SARG officials the positive value international NGOs can offer in assisting refugees.

CORBIN